

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, 8, 9, 12-20, and 22-24 are pending in the application. Claims 1 and 12 have been cancelled by this amendment. Therefore, claims 4, 8, 9, 13-20, and 22-24 are at issue.

This amendment is submitted in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.116(a) and §1.116(b) in order to present the rejected claims in a better form for allowance or appeal. The amendment is submitted to eliminate rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103. The amendment should be entered because it places the application in better form for allowance or appeal, and the amendment does not require further searching or present any new issues.

Claim 22 has been amended to incorporate the features of originally filed and now-cancelled claim 12, which serves as support for this amendment. Several dependent claims have been amended to correct the form and dependencies of the claims.

Claims 1, 4, 8, 14, 16-20, and 22-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over WO 97/03675 (WO '675). Claims 1, 4, 8, 9, 14-20, and 22-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious over WO 99/30697 (WO '697) and WO '675 in view of EP 0 645 651 (EP '651). Claims 12 and 13 are objected to, but allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicants have rewritten claim 12 in independent form by incorporating the features of claim 12 into independent claim 22. All remaining pending claims depend from claim 22. The rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103, therefore, are now moot.

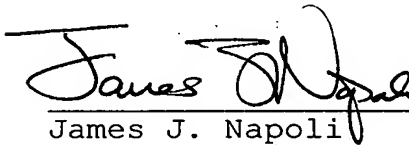
Accordingly, it is submitted that the rejection of the pending claims under 35 U.S.C. §103 should be withdrawn and the application passed to issue. An early and favorable action on the merits is respectfully requested.

Should the examiner wish to discuss the foregoing, or any matter of form in an effort to advance this application toward allowance, the examiner is urged to telephone the undersigned at the indicated number.

Respectfully submitted,

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